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# Signifying the sutured Self. An Anatomy of mock-epic rituals in Jere Hoar's "Body Parts - A memory of 1944"

Alice Clark

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- 1 "Body Parts - a Memory of 1944" opens in the suggestive locus of "Artie's Print Shop" situated in Montgomery Alabama during World War II and is thus proleptic of an upcoming era of radical social disruption, unrest and violence in the South. The onomastic implications of Montgomery recall the boycott provoked by Martin Luther King's "freedom riders" in 1956. Such intertextual references further corroborate the disruptive force at the heart of Hoar's writing since the souvenir of Montgomery encourages the reader to make a metaphorical leap into the social agitation of the deep South in the 1950's. Although the problem of ethnic unrest (civil rights) is broached implicitly, it would be unjustified to limit our appreciation of the short story to this topic alone. In fact "Body Part's" clears the terrain for some of the most heated social issues at the heart of contemporary American society - notably the explosive contentions of gender relations.<sup>1</sup> Jere Hoar's short story, "Body Parts" encapsulates two chronotopes: the working world of infirm men in "Artie's Print Shop" and the domestic topos of Billy's home where women rule as tyrants. Thus, the fifteen year-old protagonist identifies with non-traditional role models: strong women and weak men.
- 2 At first sight "Artie's Print Shop" has all the outward signs of a man's world. Machinery is run and operated by men; however, male authority is called into question since men seem to be at the mercy of the very machines they are intended to control. This is confirmed by the assemblage of atrophied, disjointed, deformed and dismembered bodies which constitutes the labor force. The office manager, Mr. Sardo, a midget, oversees a maimed crew of male operators: Raymond "the foreman of the mail room" who limps, Bewick Coulter, missing two fingertips that a "paper folder ate", the deaf and dumb Linotypes,

and most significantly Billy, an "apprentice" blade operator in the print shop missing a hand jammed in the paper rollers.

- 3 The insistence on mutilated parts of the male anatomy seems to suggest that limbs and appendages in "Body Parts" are a metonymical displacement to castration. A case in point is the signifier "limp" used to describe the incapacitated assembly line director Raymond. We may infer, for example, that one of the signifieds of the signifier "limp" corresponds to the notion of impotence. In the same way stumped or maimed limbs - "meat hooks" for hands - and the recurrence of signifiers specific to the work of printers such as "scissors" and "blades" are representative of castration since these cutting instruments are associated with "nubs" and "hongs". We may extrapolate from the above that fear of emasculation constitutes the imprecise discourse of the short story.
- 4 Although Hoar provides only scant physical description of character in the story, we can reconstruct a mental image of the protagonist Billy through his first name. First of all Billy is referred to as "Billy boy" by his mother when she sings lullabies at his bedside. This recalls a popular American dialogue song about "Billy Boy", an adolescent lover and chaste soldier who is in quest of the *virgo intacta*. Like the adolescent Billy in "Body Parts", the soldier is seeking the "idol of his life" provided that she "can bake a cherry pie as quick as a cat can wink its eye", the baking of the pie being a metaphor for pregnancy.
- 5 It is commonly acknowledged that the cherry is an allusion to forbidden fruit - that is to say the taking of the woman's virginity. So the fruit hidden in the female which is contained within the signifier "cherry" substantiates Billy's frustrated desire to possess the unattainable feminine ideal, Susie.

## I. Primal instinct under attack

- 6 Hoar translates the protagonist's move toward manhood as a violent satire of the sexual initiation rite staged in "Artie's Print Shop". A veritable ritual is enacted each morning at 8:00 when the male workers gather round the press machine as the Judge "rubs glycerine into the fingertip of his left hand", stretches "a black rubber guard over his right thumb, checks the paste reservoir of his clipper, and bumps the blade to clear it" (BP, 120).
- 7 Here machinery is sexualized so as to produce a mimetic variant on foreplay. The Judge assumes the role of a demiurgic figure reenacting sexual rites with all the modern preparatives necessary for fail-safe fornication: vaseline (glycerine), condom (rubber guard) and the right thumb (a displacement for the virile member). The fact that he holds a position of authority as Manager of the print shop while Billy's father is at war suggests that the Judge may be inscribed within the Lacanian structure of "the Name of the Father", a symbolic authority upholding the Law.
- 8 The titular Judge, Billy's boss, otherwise known as Raymond, assumes the role of Billy's surrogate father who is at war with Japan. Billy refers to him as the "Judge" thus corroborating the boy's need to identify with a patriarchal figure in the absence of a paternal ideal. Billy's preliminary initiation experience requires his participation in fantasy rituals with the older male operators. In accompanying them regularly to the Mail Room, he is authorized to gaze at Female pin-ups which the Judge has selected for display. It is of interest to note that Billy has just recently been initiated into the Mail Room, a secret male locus where the operators furtively "look up to" 253 clippings of

women pasted on the walls. Despite his attempt to integrate into the operator's voyeuristic clique, Billy admits: "There is a conspiracy to keep me in ignorance" (BP, 123).

- 9 An attentive reader cannot afford to overlook the allusion made to "conspiracy" since it is an implicit statement about Billy's ignorance concerning sexual matters. This is further suggested through the metonymical transfer of sexual expertise to machinery; indeed the adolescent is perplexed as to "which buttons to hit on women" (BP, 116). Despite his reading of Dr Lucian Oate's sex manual and the fact that he can snatch newspapers as fast as the Judge without losing digits (BP, 129), Billy has not proven to be a successful seducer: "Women get bored and smoke a cigarette on you, or go frigid if you do not do everything right and in correct order", he muses, concluding "Screwing is a terrible responsibility" (BP, 116).
- 10 Problematic relations with women are often evoked within a tissue of complex signifiers concerning the anatomized male body, the thumb being the most informative member. Textual evidence suggests that the thumb is an extended metaphor for the prenatal or natal appendage. If we assume that the structure of a metaphor is equivalent to a symptom, another signified of the signifierthumb may be "regression".
- 11 In fact, women are held responsible for blocking Billy's path to manhood. He complains bitterly about persecuting figures who share his home, notably the "harpies" - two old maid aunts who "do not know anything about becoming a man" (BP, 117). Although Billy no longer expresses a greed for "peach cobbler and banana pudding", the harpies continue to treat his palate as if it lusted after the taste of childhood. Desperate to become a man, he hopes his father will soon return to "drive the harpies from the castle" (BP, 118).
- 12 Throughout the short story we are confronted with enigmatic representations of the thumb which feed into the lexical field of orality. For instance, the office manager is nicknamed "Tom Thumb", and Susie, Billy's platonic love, often motions to him pointing not with her index, but with her thumb. Gladys, Susie's foil, who is as black and hot-blooded as Susie is white and chaste is the central erotic figure of oral fixation - Billy lusts, not only after her body, but after "her eyes, chocolate as Goo-Goo Clusters" (BP, 115), a fast-food dessert equivalent to *un gâteau fourré*.
- 13 The recurrence of images corresponding to the mouth and the thumb create an isotopic field of signifiers corroborating the dominant position of the autoerotic appendage in "Body Parts". Symptomatic of the oral stage, this desire for regression may be interpreted as a metonymical displacement from the parcelled self to the lost object, i.e., the mother.<sup>2</sup>
- 14 Billy's mother is rarely mentioned in the text, but we know that by singing bits of the dialogue song "Billy boy" at his bedside she has the power of captivating her son, and lulling him to sleep. In fact, the mother's pure voice of divine femininity recalls the seductive voice of the alienating female incarnated by the antique *Sirens* whose enticing melodies Ulysses will escape only through self-imposed captivity. Thus, the dialogue song functions as a compressed image of the heroic male in quest of an unattainable ideal. Billy boy - the young soldier in search of a virgin wife - forms a mirrored relation with Billy, the press operator in pursuit of Susie, the impregnable woman with whom he jokingly takes "Holy Communion" (BP, 111).
- 15 In both instances the adolescent displaces his desire onto an unattainable female model making it impossible to sever with the maternal object. In "Body Parts" Hoar mocks the grotesque image of the omnivorous mother who maintains an emasculating hold on the

son by garbing him in the mixed gender trappings of a Ganymede: "My mother bought me knickers until I was the last boy in America wearing them... When the war came the manufacturers of America said 'No. We will not manufacture knickers for one boy in Alabama'" (BP, 123). Such contemptuous gibing about effeminacy allows Hoar to highlight the devastating effect that the absence of men had on the wartime South. In the context of "Body Parts", those who stay at home in Montgomery end up invalid or risk emasculation, contrasting sharply with the heroic male at war with Japan.

## II. The predatory work of women's authority

- 16 The second episode of Billy's initiation rite is conceived as a mock representation of sexual intercourse where the male has become a victim of the machine over which he no longer has any authority. In this scene, Billy plunges into a fantasy world; deaf to the warnings of his co-workers, he disregards the clanging of the printing press whose voracious jaws prepare themselves for their next victim.
- 17 Hoar stages this symbolic scene of castration in "Artie's Print Shop" where particular attention is given to digits and limbs. The obsessive focalization on these body parts is proleptic of the inherent fear of castration which looms symbolically over the operators who are forced to work at a breakneck pace in order to prove they can snatch newspapers from running folders without losing digits.
- 18 On the metatextual level we may read this passage as a representation of the actual genetics of creation. In fact "Body Parts" revives a tradition particular to the late Renaissance and early seventeenth century where the printing press is conceived of in heavily satirical terms as having reproductive functions. In the work of playwrights such as Ben Jonson, (*The Staple of News*, 1625), the cutting function of the blade within the generative womb of the press suggests a satirical jab at the viability of the creative act itself as a form of regeneration. In Jonson's work as in Hoar's, dismemberment is central to the question of genetics since the poet favours not the sexual union, but rather the cutting and piecing together of the poetic fragments. It is significant that the attempt to dismember recalls the poetic process itself, consequently the printing press can be understood in Ovidian or Orphic<sup>3</sup> terms as a metaphor for the act of mutilation whose aim is to recover or regenerate creative power<sup>4</sup>.
- 19 In "Body Parts" hypermetonymical images of buttons, switches and blades accentuate the antagonistic forces - reproductive and destructive - inherent in the creative agent of the printing press and consequently in man himself. Nowhere is this more evident than in "Artie's Print Shop" where a man's virility is assessed - not in terms of money or muscle power - but in terms of digital power: "I have fast hands that can snatch newspapers from a running folder without losing digits", brags the narrator (BP, 129).
- 20 However, as we shall see, the phallogentric position that Billy lays claim to is ultimately disclaimed in the bloody dismantling of his arm, a displacement for his male organ. The fantasmagorical scene of Billy's sexual initiation occurs as a mock-epic exploit whereby the adolescent comes to the rescue of his boss Harold who has lost control over the printing press. In fact this event echoes the first topos where machinery was animated so as to simulate the erotic act of foreplay, only here the context of dehumanized sexuality is taken one step further since it is now a question of penetrating the *virgo intacta*.

- 21 In this fantasy Billy's symbolic deflowering of Susie translates an anguished spirit of competition with his elder rival, Harold who "jams his thumb onto the press switch" which is "the eye of the Fate that denies him Susie" (BP, 130-31). The press switch obviously forms a contiguous link with female anatomy recalling Billy's fear of measuring up to female orgiastic potential which functions much like a machine, so that female body parts like the parts of a machine depend upon the efficiency of its operator who must know which "buttons to hit on women" (BP, 116).
- 22 When Billy comes to his boss's rescue, delirious thinking about Susie, he realizes too late that he has jammed his fingers in the paper rips. "The rollers grind with the sound our washing machine makes in squeezing a bedspread", he notes. "Thick stuff drips from the rollers and forms a red lake on the inky floor. Blood stands high on the greasy ink and spills into a crooked stream" (BP, 131). Billy ultimately loses all control over the machine which is spewing "newspapers, faster and faster, clanking and groaning" (BP, 131) howling like the cry of the totemic animal - or *primitive horde* which nothing can silence since it is also the primordial authentic experience of the outlawed orgiastic voice of femininity<sup>5</sup>. So, the all-powerful superego of the machine, which has taken the form of the female law disguised as the pleasure principle, brings on an ultimate loss of control resulting in symbolic castration.
- 23 Once the "black monster" is dismembered Billy's arm is retrieved, but minus a hand. In his eyes it resembles a phallus, or what he calls a "nub": "it is about a foot long, hairy, with a red, slick head" (BP, 133) and in this sense it is proof of virility: "I have been through an **initiation** and now I am a man" (BP, 137). Here the narrator intentionally plays upon the reader's potential to enter into a game of metaphorical substitution, a term Guy Rosolato succinctly dubs as "projective metaphorisation". As Rosolato points out, the utterance can become the arena in which the reader projects his own fantasies depending upon the potential shifts in meaning determined by the censure<sup>6</sup>.
- 24 In this game of sexual initiation Billy's assertion of virility seems dubious if we are to consider his relationship with the machine which has been animated and sexualized to illustrate the dehumanizing force of the castrating female. Thus Susie assumes the symbolic status of the machine which places Billy in the position of a vanquished male. This in turn substantiates the dominance of the female subject implied in the signifier "rollers" - the omnivorous female parts of the printing machine - and the "button" - the orgiastic potential of the female member - over the male subject. In sexualizing the machine, Hoar reduces the female to a button/clitoris with powerful orgiastic potential which is equivalent to her destructive, castrating capacities. The experience of male anatomization in "Body Parts" calls up one of the principal preoccupations of Postmodernism: decentered sexuality.
- 25 The condition of the decentered or fragmented subject is a recurrent theme in postmodern writing particularly in so far as gender distinctions are concerned. Quite often disruption is frequently figured as female - a projection of the fear of the irrational disruptive drive which has gone "out of control". Thus the female disruptive force is often a metonymy for the uncontrollable power of technology. In Hoar's short story this blind force is given parodic shape via machines which have outstripped the rational dominance of the male<sup>7</sup>.
- 26 On a larger scale, the postmodern condition is in part the consequence of an inability to rethink a self not premised in some way on the nineteenth century ideal of personal

autonomy not subjugated to technology. But one may venture to say that man has never possessed this kind of autonomy; it is a cultural mystification recuperated by Romanticism, as a primordial authentic mode of being which is non-rationalisable and pre-conceptual<sup>8</sup>.

- 27 Although it claims to have left behind the metaphysical ground of romantic thought, Romanticism continues to exist at the heart of Postmodernism as an alternative mode of *idealism*. Indeed, it appears to be an extension of the dualistic Wordsworthian creation. Hoar seems to replace the notion of nature with the notion of body seated in a new instinctual foundation. As the brutally parodic rape scene in "Body Parts" will demonstrate, this primordial authentic being continues to function insidiously within the context of duality.
- 28 Hoar mounts the rape of Susie as a mock-heroic fantasy structure where a lithe, one-armed Billy fights off proxy figures of powerful males, first with a serrated knife, then a Stacy Adamses, finally clamping the last attacker with a Japanese Strangle Hold. The vanquished crawl away and Susie clings to the protagonist for protection, but Hoar's cartooning of the demiurgic venture of Susie's rescue culminates in a radical turnabout whereby Billy substitutes Gladys for Susie thus affirming his incapacity to reconcile black and white oppositions. Finding the first version of his fantasy inadequate, Billy discards Susie who is rubbing her naked body against him, taking instead, her dark double, Gladys, who gazes at him submissively before sinking to the ground in the shadows where the boy leaps onto his carnal reward "dominating her totally" (BP, 135).
- 29 This salacious episode echoes the castration scene giving it the signification of rape, thus corroborating the infirmity of the male principle. Once again, Billy finds himself in a mirror relation of impotence with the female since his vision is dependent upon maintaining the woman (Gladys) in a subservient position. Furthermore, the violent rejection of the white woman is symptomatic of the ideal ego's need to smash the lost imaginary object of desire (Susie), the unattainable double of the "other", i.e. the mother. However, by defiling the other attainable object of desire (Gladys), in the name of the mother, the protagonist confirms his atavistic attachment to the maternal ideal.
- 30 The male principle is called into question once again in "the Maxwell Army Air Force Base Hospital" where Billy lies inert amongst Anglo-Saxon veterans who have been disabled at war. Mutilated by the printing press, Billy, the youngest of the maimed press operators, finds himself in a mirror relation with the wounded war victims in the Army Hospital. In either case - be it the weak men who stay at home, or the strong ones who go to war - the male in "Body Parts" is an impotent victim, not a potent war hero. This validates the signification of male infirmity as a domestic and geo-political issue in Hoar's work.
- 31 Postmodernism has largely adopted the habit of subverting gender roles and a forerunner of this trend can be traced back to Southern literature. The Confederate heritage of conservative rebellion against authority produced a reactionary spirit in Southern literature which would challenge traditional gender models by ascribing male authority to non-traditional female models.
- 32 One of the powerful tools used for demystifying tradition in Southern literature is myth. Hoar's work, like that of many Southern writers, uses celebrated figures from classical mythology for subversive purposes. In "Body Parts", Billy's mother, referred to as "Penelope" - reminiscent of the faithful wife type - is a castrating female in reality. Similarly, his father - alluded to as "Ulysses" - is actually a craven soldier. In reversing



the stereotypical figures of classical mythology, Hoar creates protagonists which fit into what George Lakoff considers to be "radial-structured" models.<sup>9</sup>

- 33 We can better understand the importance of mythology in Hoar's work by taking a brief look at Eudora Welty's short story "Petrified Man" which carries overbearing evidence of strong intertextual links with "Body Parts". "Petrified Man" will enable us to better understand the signification of rape in Billy's fantasy structure. In both stories the adolescent resorts to sexual assault in order to mobilize his disempowered sexuality. Eudora Welty's short story stages a similar crisis where a partially immobilized circus freak, the "petrified man", is also the subject who initiates a gang rape<sup>10</sup>.
- 34 The infirmity of the circus freak, a metonymy for the disenfranchised modern male, is further suggested in the title "Petrified Man". Bearing no definite article of specification, the title of the short story obviously aims at "men" in the generic sense of the term. Like Hoar's victims, Welty's male metonymic models are prey to female castrating types. "Petrified Man"'s analogical setting: the hair salon, and its **Medusa** clients act as extended metaphors for the disempowering influence that women exercise over men. This is substantiated by a striking onomastic link between "Body Parts" and "Petrified Man" since they both feature an infantile type whose name is "Billy Boy". In "Petrified Man" Billy Boy, a three year-old toddler, crawls about at the feet of female clients attempting to ward off the blows of their feet all the while sporting the client's hats, thus reminding us of Billy's effeminate get-up in "Body Parts".
- 35 Name and gender are not the only similarities between the two works. As we have mentioned, the rape strategy of the passive aggressive circus freak presents a striking parallel with Billy since both subjects confirm the in active male principle by immobilizing the female. In this case, rape responds to the structure of infirmity that has crippled the petrified male's sexuality and whose mythical equivalent can be found in the mythological figure of Medusa<sup>11</sup>.
- 36 Here we can see how myth informs the metaphorical play on notions of gender in postmodern textual strategy. Indeed, the obsessional recurrence of isotopies concerning petrification and mutilation of the male suggest that the phallic object has been reduced to a mere prehensile appendage. Thus the stumped, disjointed and immobilized male members in the war hospital recall the postmodern preoccupation with social and political dislocation since the male principle seems to have been marginalized, in short relegated to the fringes of society. What is foreclosed here is virility on the grand scale of anglo-saxon culture.

### III. The return of the father

- 37 In the **terminal fantasy structure** of "Body Parts", the myth of the heroic ideal resurfaces in the form of a parody of the return of Ulysses taken from the *Odyssey*. Physically maimed, coveted by his mother and driven to despair by his two Aunts, the "harpies", who refuse to recognize his dawning manhood, Billy desperately longs for the return of his father. Hoar gives parodic shape to Billy's plight by staging the imagined homecoming of the father in Montgomery Alabama as a compressed image of the heroic festivities celebrated in Ithaca. The father appears as a mock substitute for Ulysses carrying a samurai sword, the mother is cast in the part of Penelope. As for the son, he is



reduced to a "grizzled head", a metonymy for the Greek warrior's old dog Argos (BP, 118).

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- 38 In associating himself with the underdog and contrarily subscribing the Greek heroic archetype to his father, Billy assumes a subservient position of absolute obedience toward the paternal ideal. This recalls the subordinate position of the authoritarian, castrating female that he has been trying to escape. In "Body Parts" the disempowered male is often confronted with cutting instruments: Susie brandishes scissors before her boss, Billy's hand is ripped off in the paper rips, and his father returns home "swinging a samurai sword around the house breaking glass" (BP, 118).
- 39 When placed in the context of Billy's rite of passage, lacerating tools may connote symbolic castration. This is corroborated by the fact that Billy sees his father as an omnipotent rival. Consequently the trope of the "sword" may be read as a paternal metaphor in this last **fantasy structure** suggesting a repressed conflict in which Billy rivals for authority with his father. Fantasy and ritual are fundamental to Hoar's writing, and although the narrative of "Body Parts" lends itself to a psychoanalytical reading, it always has something of the mock epic mode to it. For example, in an earlier mock epic fantasy structure Hoar uses parody to evoke what is obviously an example of imaginary identification. Thus Billy's desire to appropriate the heroic strength of his father is contingent upon his buying a package of "Trojan Condoms" (BP, 127) emblematic of the potency of Roman soldiers.
- 40 When at last Billy is confronted with the **authentic return of the father**, he refuses to believe the litany of unheroic adventures his dad relates about his war experience, particularly the fact that he was a mere *courrier*. Faced with this harsh truth, the son prefers to maintain his illusions about the paternal ideal instead. Nevertheless, it is thanks to the return of the father that Billy's heroic ideal and his cult of certainty will be totally discredited.
- 41 In "Body Parts" the protagonist's move toward reality is related as a dialectical process drawing on ready-made imperialistic myths whose surface structure when stripped away reveals crude and troubling contradictions. In this way Hoar disqualifies the golden myth of an heroic America on a global scale by subverting the geo-political convictions of the United States in 1944. At first sight the emblems on the father's flight jacket - the splayed wings of "silver eagles printed upon leather epaulets and a shower of shooting stars on the sholder" (BP, 139) appear to be mythological tokens in praise of America. However, the father's inner experience of war contrasts sharply with his heroic attire.
- 42 By revealing the fact that he played only a bit part in the war as a courier, the father destroys Billy's illusions of paternal grandeur. In so doing the adolescent is obliged to renounce his fantasy of believing that his father was awarded the "Purple Heart". Even worse he comes to the realization that his father was no better than a "voyeur" since he witnessed heroic incidents of the Japanese, but never played an active role in battle himself. As for the Americans, his father states: "in all the fighting on Saipan we only captured seventeen hundred people. Most were civilians. The few soldiers we picked up were incapacitated" (BP, 142).
- 43 The signifying chain in this passage reverberates with signs of impotent and maimed men all constituting unheroic figures of the American Infantry in Saipan, thus undermining the legendary stature of America in World War II. Though Billy struggles to maintain a stance of moral blindness by resisting reality, "He is telling the truth, and I hate it" (BP,

139), he is forced to see the imperialistic mask of the American demigod ripped off and replaced by the heroic alternative of the Japanese model.

- 44 In refusing to defend his son's authoritative convictions about the American ideal, the father liberally exalts Japanese manhood and military conduct, thus reversing the received ideas of the founding principles of American ideology. He goes so far as to attribute the Roman cult of honour, virility, and military prowess to the anti-heroic and anti-American model of the so-called "yellow-bellied Japanese", thus opening his son's eyes to the unpleasant reality that truth exists as a highly personal experience.
- 45 This remembering of 1944 as an alternative ideology, or a truncated myth suggests we have gone full circle in the revelation process of the protagonist who is reaching the point of epiphany: "This is not a revealing little insight. It is a truth that turns my world" (BP, 142).
- 46 However, the closing lines of the short story suggest that Billy's world is confined to circularity and subtly demands that we question the outcome of his rite of passage and his parting with heroic ideals. Although Billy has renounced the obligations of manual labor in "Artie's Print Shop" and has started a new intellectual life at high-school, it seems as if he has displaced his quest for the heroic paternal ideal onto the academic model of the professor. This sign of circularity is adumbrated by his friend Jack who traces a circle in the dust as a mute response to Billy's cry of jubilation at being back at school where "Teachers don't have doubts" (BP, 147).

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## NOTES

1. The hypermetonymical representation of dismembered human anatomy - a construct Hoar uses to raise some of the complex questions concerning gender roles - recalls the minimalistic universe of Raymond Carver's marginalized male and female members struggling to find a sense or a center of equilibrium in a Post World War II American society.
2. C.f. "le stade du miroir", the mirror stage, mentioned for the first time in Lacan's article "la Famille" de *l'Encyclopédie française*, 1936.
3. Orpheus, incarnation of the creative impulse, was torn to pieces by the Thracian women who were jealous of his power over men.
4. See Elizabeth Einstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in early-modern Europe*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, (2 tomes in 1 vol). Grenoble library.
5. See Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Tabou, a psychoanalytical interpretation of the social life of primitive people*, Payot, 1984.
6. Guy Rosolato, *La Relation d'inconnu*, "L'oscillation métaphoro-métonymique", Gallimard, NRF, 1978, p. 57.
7. See Pynchon, V, 1969. See the case of Pynchon's elusively destructive female (V), who is associated with major historical crises.
8. See Patricia Waugh's article "Modernism, Postmodernism, Feminism: Gender and Autonomy Theory" in *Practising Postmodernism/Reading Postmodernism*, Edward Arnold, 1992.

9. See George Lakoff, *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things, What Categories Reveal about the Mind*, University of Chicago Press, 1987, p. 8. By "radial structured", Lakoff means a model which doesn't fit into a classical concept or category, it is rather "one where there is a central case and conventionalized variations on it which cannot be predicted by general rules".
  10. See Eudora Welty, *Thirteen Stories*, "Petrified Man", 69-84, Harcourt Brace, London, 1993, p 69.
  11. The Medusa in this short story is a metaphor for castration. Ovid recounts the rape of Medusa by Neptune who ravished her in the temple to avenge her innumerable suitors. The latter, victims of her indifference, were powerless to escape the fatal attraction of her beauty and exquisite hair. In ending the cycle of symbolic castration that the Medusa had inflicted on men, Perseus would ironically decapitate her, a metonymic displacement for female castration.
  12. Argos will perish upon seeing his long lost master.
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## RÉSUMÉS

Dans la longue nouvelle quelque peu insolite de Jere Hoar, "Body Parts - a Memory of 1944", le jeune narrateur Billy promène son regard sur ses camarades de travail, hommes mûrs, qui ont tous eu un membre atrophié par la courroie de l'imprimerie. Billy, qui a tout juste 15 ans, va subir le même sort que ses confrères dans une scène centrale où il se fait arracher une main coincée dans la rotative de l'atelier d'impression. Transporté à l'hôpital militaire, Billy se trouve de nouveau entouré de corps atrophiés, mais cette fois-ci c'est la guerre qui en est la cause.

La salle d'imprimerie où s'effectue le rite de passage du jeune protagoniste nous fournira ce qu'il convient d'appeler la face officielle du texte. On découvre que Artie's Print Shop permet à Billy d'échapper à l'atmosphère féminine étouffante de sa maison, lui offrant ainsi un lieu privilégié où il peut se retrouver en compagnie d'hommes comme l'indique la polysémie du signifiant "mail room", jeu de mots sur la salle où on trie le courrier et où se rencontre la gente masculine.

L'objet de cet article sera de proposer une lecture psychanalytique de la nouvelle qui prendra en compte non seulement le discours officiel du texte - le rite de passage de Billy - mais aussi sa face cachée contenue dans la représentation hypermétonymique du corps.

## AUTEURS

### ALICE CLARK

est angliciste et comparatiste, maître de conférences à l'Université de Nantes. Elle a notamment publié : "Shakespeare as the French would have him: Voltaire and Neral", in *The Shakespeare Year book*, vol. 5, "Shakespeare and France", edited by Holger Klein et Jean-Marie Maguin, Edwin Mellen Press, New York, 1995. "Gérard de Nerval, porte-parole de la réforme dramatique shakespearienne", in *Cahiers Gérard de Nerval*, Mulhouse, 1994. *La Nouvelle anglo-saxonne, Initiation à une Lecture Psychanalytique*, en collaboration avec Claude Maisonnat et Patrick Badonnel, Collection Hachette Supérieur, 1998. Actuellement, elle travaille sur *Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*, à paraître en 1999.